
A
S E R M O N.

99

S. E. R. M. O. N.

9

694.2.10.
9

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN

OXFORD CHAPEL,

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 1793.

BY THE REV. ROBERT LOWTH, A. M.
PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

1793.

SERMON

PREACHED IN

OXFORD CHAPEL

ON SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 1841

BY THE REV. ROBERT LOWTH, A.M.

PRESIDENT OF ST. PAUL'S

LONDON

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND

A
S E R M O N.

I PETER, c. ii. v. 16.

" AS FREE, AND NOT USING YOUR LIBERTY FOR A CLOKE OF
" MALICIOUSNESS."

IN this Epistle, which is addressed, not to his Brethren and Countrymen alone, but to a great part of the Gentile world,—St. Peter, among many weighty precepts, takes occasion to introduce this caution.

Directed by the Spirit of God to an intimate knowledge of the Heart of Man, he well knew how liable all blessings were to be abused; perhaps in proportion to their intrinsic value. Foreseeing the sinister purposes to which the blessing of Liberty was peculiarly exposed, he earnestly exhorts them to guard against the effects which any sudden emancipation from bondage was likely to produce; thinking it his duty thus early to forewarn them of a transition, so dangerous to their peace and happiness.

A

Wherever

Wherever the precepts of our Saviour have operated ; as long as the Scriptures have been referred to as the rule of life—so long, and so universally, has the world continued guiltless of this sin of Presumption. The Apostle indeed gave it as a Caution : but it remained to the present age, after an interval of near 2000 years, to convert that Caution into the form of a Prophecy ; and by fulfilling it almost beyond the extent even of a Prophet's intuition, has it awakened anew, a tremendous sense of the dangers we are exposed to, by relaxation in matters of Religion. What might not then have been expected from a People who discountenance all Religion, and who disown a superintending Providence !

It is unfortunately but too much the complexion of the present times, to consider events, of whatever magnitude, as effects produced by mere political causes, with a reference only to the institutions of Man. But if ever events betrayed the interference of the powers of Darkness,—if ever enormities challenged the just wrath of Heaven—surely the enormities and the events of a neighbouring nation, can no otherwise be explained.

Our Saviour has declared, that “ Whosoever disowns “ him—him will He disown.” They have disowned Him ; and they seem to be wholly given up to their own inhuman devices. Our Saviour, wearied out during his Ministry, by unthankfulness and impenitence, exclaims—“ Woe unto “ thee

“ thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty
 “ works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and
 “ Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth
 “ and ashes: But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable
 “ for Tyre and Sidon in the day of Judgment, than for you.
 “ —And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven,
 “ shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works
 “ which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom,
 “ it had remained to this day: But I say unto you, that it
 “ shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day
 “ of Judgment, than for thee!”

Had this generation, in the spirit of Prophecy, been told,
 that so tremendous a sentence would have been incurred in
 these our days—the prediction had been rejected with in-
 dignation and scorn. Yet have we lived to see it provoked,
 under circumstances of positive aggravation. In their day,
 indeed, Vice was eagerly pursued, and embraced: but we
 have beheld Virtue itself put to flight. In their day, obe-
 dience to the ruling powers was disputed, and disclaimed:
 in ours, all subordination has been exploded, and Anarchy
 rides triumphant: Compassion has been punished with
 Death; and Gratitude with Assassination. In their day, the
 Altars of the Lord were thrown down, and his Sacrifice was
 neglected: in ours, Religion itself is defaced; and its Mi-
 nisters are annihilated. In their day, the Almighty was
 forsaken, and Idolatry was established: in ours, the Almighty

has been equally forsaken—*forfaken*, did I say?—disowned, and rejected! openly vilified, and publicly blasphemed! Nor have they scrupled to threaten the establishment of Seminaries, for the avowed purpose of professed Atheism!

Of such Seminaries may this Country ever remain practically ignorant! It highly deserves to be one of the many objects of our warmest gratitude, that a gracious Providence hath kindled an emulation among us to gratify the public feeling, and to secure the future welfare of Society, by the general establishment of Seminaries, to the glory of God, and the credit of human nature.

To carry on the comparison between the two ages is impracticable: for the history of the Jews does not furnish us with materials for the task. Wicked as the world then was, it had not as yet learnt to substitute cruelty and outrage for humanity: nor had a thirst for blood nothing less than infernal supplanted the natural propensity to compassion, instinctive in the human heart. In vain we search the annals of the most lawless times, or the most depraved nations,—in vain we ransack History at large, for any parallel: nor does language furnish us with expressions at all adequate to the horror with which their conduct has inspired the rest of the world.—David reproached the Champion of the Philistines with having “defied the armies of the living God.” They have defied, not his armies, but the living God himself!

Our

Our Saviour, whose affectionate regard to mankind, ever prompted Him to promote their comforts here, and their happiness hereafter,—besought us with an anxious earnestness to accustom ourselves to dwell with fondness on the mild and manly affections of the mind. Thus commissioned, the Apostle more particularly recommends, and enforces them: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are
 “ honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are
 “ pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,—if
 “ there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on
 “ these things.”—On which of these things have our neighbours thought? As they have burst asunder the great chain of Government, so have they forced every individual link by which Society is bound together; and outraged every feeling of the human heart. One would suppose, that the God whom they worship, had said—“Whatsoever things
 “ are false, whatsoever things are dishonest, whatsoever
 “ things are unjust, whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever
 “ ever things are disgusting and of ill report,—if there be
 “ any turpitude—and if there be any vice—think on *these*
 “ things.” And on these things they *have* thought; these precepts have they most irreligiously observed.—“My Son
 “ have thou no fellowship with them; for in their anger
 “ they slew a man.” Such was the exhortation of David. But other crimes appear light, compared to their enormities: for they have slain, not with the palliation (if it may be admitted as such) of Anger; but deliberately, and in cold blood,
 have

have they butchered defenceless thousands. Instead of one man, their malice should seem directed against mankind. The end they originally professed to obtain, was Liberty. Not content with having themselves acquired what they are pleased so to call, they insist upon forcing Freedom on all the world besides: as a passport to which they impose Vassalage in the worst sense of the word. Instead of Freedom, they give the most abject Slavery; and Bondage instead of the Rights of Man. Professing to ease their shoulders of the intolerable burthen of Tribute, they demand, at the point of the bayonet, *all*—nay more than they possess on earth. Fraternity is their watchword for Conspiracy and Rebellion: and the Law of Nature is to them the Phoenix which rises from the ashes of all other laws, both Human and Divine.

For what other purpose have they used their Liberty, but “for a cloke of maliciousness?” Neither Age nor Sex have protected the weak, nor the innocent, from their malice. As the higher orders were wont to be esteemed for their refinement, and the lower for their ingenuity, so have they maintained, or rather transferred, their original claim to that reputation, by refinement on cruelty the most exquisite, and by ingenuity in whatever disgraces human nature. They have at length glutted their appetite for blood by a Deed, which, not only in itself, but from the aggravation of circumstances attending it, will for ever stamp the nation with
indelible

indelible characters of Injustice, Cowardice, and Infamy. To what other motive shall we impute this deed, than to a malice no otherwise to be appeased? Conscious of the difficulty of steeling the Female bosom against the irresistible claims of Pity, with a diabolical forecast they effectually guarded against any favourable impression, which human suffering in its most pitiable state might produce, by forbidding the appearance of the Sex. Aware of the different impressions which Nature hath imprinted on the Human Heart at large,—how apt an imagination, heated by passion, and impelled by prejudice to concur in any given act—yet, upon cool reflection, and when the moment of executing its purpose is absolutely arrived—how apt the same mind is to relax of its severity, and to relent of its resolves;—Conscious of this probability, they denied their devoted victim the privilege even of a last farewell, and hurried their once adored Monarch into a better world, silencing all rising emotions of remorse, amidst the bray of instruments, and the din of arms!

Out of this mass of Iniquity, arises however *one* Good. The character of an individual is rescued from misapprehension; and he will be handed down to posterity, as a man possessed of fortitude and equanimity under the severest of trials, seldom equalled, never excelled:—as a man, whose Heart was fraught with the tenderest Affection for his Family;

mily; with the steadiest Attachment to his Friends; and with the purest Christian Charity towards his Enemies !

On this topic might we indulge, till Sensibility were exhausted. But while we are convinced how vain and fruitless are the effusions of Sentiment, we cannot but be sensible, that sober reasoning on the causes, and serious reflection on the event, may render us the most valuable service. If such reflection be useful to any man, or to any set of men; on a Briton, and on Christians is it an indispensable duty. The inducements which should operate on us are so numerous and so powerful, that (though they will occur to every thinking individual) to state but a few of them cannot but flash conviction on the mind of thoughtlessness, or even of disaffection itself.

We live under a Government, and under Laws, which, though they may be aspersed with the imputation of not being positively perfect (which nothing Human can be, or ever was required, or designed to be), are yet confessedly unequalled at this day on earth; where the Person, the Property, and the Life of every individual are equally protected and secured. With all their boasted equality, can our neighbours boast of this? Out of their twenty-four millions, can any one Individual say as much? Or can any Individual in this country challenge the contrary? Does
not

not the meanest Peasant, whom God has blessed with an honest heart and sound health, enjoy all the solid comforts resulting from impartial Laws, which the Sovereign himself enjoys? Nay, he enjoys more! For he bears not about him that sleepless burthen of Responsibility, which, however it may feed Ostentation, or flatter Ambition, precludes the genuine luxury of an Heart occupied only by the tranquil endearments, and the uninterrupted duties of Domestic Life.

Are our neighbours ever likely to boast of this? Can it now even enter into their conceptions? For, insecure as they justly felt themselves from the iron gripe of Despotism, under their old Government, they are now, alas! debarred from even contemplating a prospect so interesting, under the adamant grasp of Anarchy unexampled.

Equality, in the strict acceptation of the word, is neither desirable, nor practicable. If all were rich, who would condescend to work? and without labour, Society could not exist. If all were poor, who could stand forward to reward Industry? and without reward, emulation would lose its object, and exertion its sinews. That we are not born equal is manifest, from there being scarce any two individuals of equal strength either of body, or of mind. Whatever visionary Theorists may dream, the fact is not within the compass of human possibility. To be convinced of which, we have only to observe the actual state of Society among our neighbours.

neighbours. After all their methods of confounding every order not absolutely annihilated,—after every devisable mode of striking the level, where is even their nominal Equality? In spite of all their detestation of Rank and Title, there are as many distinctions between Man and Man in their state of Anarchy, as would answer most purposes of good order in civil Society. The great difference seems to consist in this; that instead of respect and deference being paid to Virtue and Talents,—Homage is exacted, in proportion to individual, or collective depravity.

While we are sensible of acknowledged Blessings, let us not perversely overlook those which are no less positive and palpable, because they assume to vulgar observation the course only of nature; which they do not consider is nothing less than the immediate arrangement of a constantly superintending Providence.

From our insular situation, we are more peculiarly defended by Nature (which again is Providence) from the external attacks of other nations—while in our Climate, as in our Constitution, we may almost say that we possess the various blessings of a Temperate Zone; equally removed from the benumbing torpor of the Frigid,—and from the lifeless languor of the Torrid. Whose wholesome atmosphere is not infected by pestilence; the grateful produce of whose soil is not subject to be blasted by whirlwinds, and tempests; nor
to

to be convulsed by the throes of the all-devouring Earthquake.—“ Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord
“ for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth
“ for the Children of Men !”

Farewell these Privileges and these Blessings to that man, who openly dares, or secretly meditates, to destroy so striking a contrast ! When his carcase shall be swept from the face of the Earth, let his memory be branded with the name of Patricide !

If we wilfully shut our eyes against the strong light of such manifold and great mercies, and impiously withhold our bounden gratitude for them ; should we not justly subject ourselves to that affecting reproach, and solemn sentence pronounced by our Saviour on the city of Jerusalem ? “ Oh !
“ Jerusalem, Jerusalem—who stonest thy Prophets, and
“ killest those which are sent unto thee : how often would
“ I have gathered you together, even as an hen gathereth
“ her chickens under her wing—and ye would not ! Behold,
“ your house is left desolate !”

Let us, on the contrary, “ even in this our day, know
“ the things which belong unto our peace, before they are
“ hid from our eyes.” Let us so conduct ourselves in our different callings, as to merit the approbation and protection of God. And “ if God be for us, who can be against us !”

THE END.

to be rewarded by the grace of the all-devouring Earth-quake. Or that man would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the Children of Men.

Remember their Privileges and their Blessings to that man, who openly dares, or secretly pretends, to deny, or striking a counterfeit. When his carcass shall be swept from the face of the Earth, let his memory be branded with the name of Parricide!

If we witness that our eyes against the strong light of such manifold and great mercies, and indignantly withhold our praises gratitude for them; should we not withal just ourselves to the reflecting reproach, and solemn remembrance pronounced by our Saviour on the city of Jerusalem? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem—how often thy Prophets, and killed those which are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thee together, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—and ye would not! Behold, your house is left desolate!"

Let us, on the contrary, "even in this our day know the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes." Let us so conduct ourselves, as our different callings, as to merit the approbation and protection of God. And "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

